

VZCZCXRO6123  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMOS  
DE RUEHAK #1464/01 0800534  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 210534Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4087  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD PRIORITY  
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1449  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA// PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/425ABS IZMIR TU//CC// PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU// PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001464

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2026

TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEVRUZ HOLIDAY SPURS CONCERN OF INCREASE IN PKK  
VIOLENCE

REF: A. ANKARA 671 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1251

[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 643

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Protests in major Turkish cities and in the southeast in advance of a traditional Kurdish holiday may harbinger the escalation of PKK/Kongra-Gel-related violence and tensions in Turkey. Although we expect an increase in violence -- including rural military clashes and urban terrorist attacks -- in association with the PKK's spring offensive, the GOT is not pushing for a military cross-border operation in northern Iraq. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Although Nevruz, the traditional Kurdish New Year, does not start until March 21, early celebrations began on March 19 with pro-Kurdish marches in several Turkish cities. Approximately 50,000 people marched in the Istanbul neighborhood of Zeytinburnu chanting slogans calling for a general amnesty of PKK members and the release of jailed PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan. In Izmir, 10,000 people marched, chanted pro-PKK slogans, and broke store windows after police tried to break up the crowd with tear gas. Twenty-five thousand people marched in Mersin, 10,000 in Siirt, and 5,000 in the far southeastern city of Hakkari. There were smaller protests in other cities.

[1](#)3. (C) Clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK/Kongra-Gel terrorists in the southeast and terrorist bombings in urban areas continue (REFS A and B). On March 12, a Turkish security forces member was killed during a military sweep using helicopters and ground troops in the southeastern province of Sirnak, according to press reports. On March 15, a bomb exploded in front of the HSBC bank branch in Diyarbakir injuring one person.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Both press and intelligence reporting have pointed toward the Nevruz holiday as a possible starting point for increased PKK violence in Turkey as well as demonstrations urged by PKK leaders to put pressure on the GOT. Nevruz itself has rarely in the past been the date of any particular spectacular attack in Turkey, perhaps because Turkish

security forces are on especially high alert that day. PKK websites indicate the organization will not launch attacks on Nevruz.

¶15. (C/NF) It is overstating the case to say that Nevruz is the starting gun for the PKK's annual spring offensive. Given the violence we have already reported (REFS A and B), it has likely started already, and the Turkish military has stepped up its own readiness significantly. It has increased security measures at its camps in the southeast, and announced its intention to occupy its traditional mountain-top observation posts just inside northern Iraq a full two months earlier than last year. As the snows in the southeast continue to melt, the current level of violence will remain steady or perhaps increase as the PKK seeks to step up attacks and the Turkish security forces increase their patrols. (NOTE: This timing is coincident with a series of scheduled senior-level USG-GOT meetings in both Ankara and Washington. END NOTE.)

¶16. (S/NF) Even as we and the GOT expect an increase in violence, we do not at this time detect any push to allow Turkey to carry out a cross-border operation (CBO) into northern Iraq to destroy PKK camps close to the border. We should note that that a Turkish CBO would require little advance warning or mass movement of troops. It would just as likely consist of F16 airstrikes and heliborne commandos, which are already operating in the area and require little to no preparatory movement. However, we have firmly clarified here with Turkey's leadership the negative impact of a possible cross-border operation and, compared to previous years, have heard little public posturing or angst in private conversations about the PKK.

ANKARA 00001464 002 OF 002

¶17. (C/NF) Indeed, Ankara appears to be calmer about the PKK in general. The GOT's Special Representative for Iraq, Oguz Celikkol, candidly told Amb. Khalilzad Feb. 25 in Baghdad that the GOT is more concerned about the future of Kirkuk than the PKK issue (REF C). And on Jan. 26, a senior TGS general (later revealed to be Deputy CHOD General Kosaner) told the press that Turkey is resigned (albeit unhappily) to the PKK's presence in northern Iraq. Although TGS later disavowed these remarks, we believe the GOT grasps that the stakes in Iraq are much higher than the PKK problem.

¶18. (S/NF) This does not mean that we should expect no protest from the GOT if PKK-related violence picks up. The GOT still looks to us to take action against the PKK in northern Iraq, or at least to pressure the KDP and PUK to take some action to limit the PKK's freedom of movement. However, many within the GOT -- including the military -- have calculated the enormous political costs of a CBO into Iraq, and have assessed that it is not worth the cost at this time. The damage to Turkey's EU bid, its relations with us and the GOI, and the risk of further destabilizing Iraq all weigh against such an intervention.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON